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amish economics



by Gene Logsdon

The Amish have become a great embarrassment to American agriculture. Many "English" farmers, as the Amish call the rest of us, are in desperate financial straits these days and relatively few are making money. So it is fashionable among writers, the clergy, politicians, farm machinery dealers and banks to depict the family farmer as a dying breed.... All of them seem to forget those small, conservatively-financed family farms that are doing quite well, thank you, of which the premier example is the Amish.

Amish farmers are still making money in these hard times despite (or rather because of) their supposedly outmoded, horse-farming ways. If they do get into financial jeopardy, it is most often from listening to the promises of modern agribusiness instead of traditional wisdom. The Amish continue to farm profitably not only with an innocent disregard for get-big-or-get-out modern technology, but without participating in direct government subsidies other than those built into market prices, which they can't avoid.

I first learned about the startlingly effective economy of Amish life when I was invited to a barn raising near Wooster, Ohio. A tornado had leveled four barns and acres of prime Amish timber. In just three weeks, the

downed trees were sawed into girders, posts and beams and the four barns rebuilt and filled with livestock donated by neighbors to replace those killed by the storm. Three weeks. Nor were the barns the usual modern, one-story metal boxes hung on poles. They were huge buildings, three and four stories high, post-and-beam framed, and held together with hand-hewn mortises and tenons. I watched the raising of the last barn in open-mouthed awe. Some 400 Amish men and boys, acting and reacting like a hive of bees in absolute harmony of cooperation, started at sunrise with only a foundation and floor and by noon had the huge edifice far enough along that you could put hay in it.

A contractor who was watching said it would have taken him and a beefed-up crew all summer to build the barn if, indeed, he could find anyone skilled enough at mortising to do it. He estimated the cost at \$100,000. I asked the Amish farmer how much cash he would have in the barn. "About \$30,000," he said. And some of that paid out by the Amish church's own insurance arrangements. "We give each other our labor," he explained. "We look forward to raisings. There are so many helping, no one has to work too hard. We get in a good visit." Not the biggest piece of the Rock imaginable carries that kind of insurance.

Not long afterwards, I gave a speech to an organization of farmers concerned with alternative methods of agriculture in which I commiserated at length with the financially depressed farmers. When my talk was over, two Amish men approached me, offering mild criticism. "We have finished one of our most financially successful years," one of them said. "It is only those farmers who have ignored common sense and tradition who are in trouble." What made his remarks more significant is that he went on to explain that he belonged to a group of Amish that had, as an experiment, temporarily allowed its members to use tractors in the field. He also was making payments on land that he had recently purchased. In other words, he was staring at the same economic gun that's pointed at English farmers and he was coming out ahead. "But," he said, "I'm going back to horses. They're more profitable."

From then on, I resolved to start cultivating the Amish as assiduously as they cultivated their fields. I had always taken our sorghum to Joe Bontragger's press in the Kenton, Ohio area not far from our farm. We bought bulk foods and angel food cake at the Peterscheims, sought advice about operating a woodworking shop at Troyers, but now I expanded my horizons to include eastern Ohio, center of the largest Amish community in the world. When I helped a neighbor haul hay to that area, I received another lesson in Amish economics. If they need to buy extra feed for their livestock, they almost always choose to buy hay and raise the grain rather than vice versa. The price of the hay is partially regained as manure after passing through the livestock, allowing them to cut down on the amount of fertilizer they need to buy. The greater mass of hay generates a greater mass of manure, adding organic matter to the soil. That is valuable beyond computer calculation. Grain farmers in my area who sold their straw and hay to the Amish were trading their soil fertility for cash of flitting value.

Whenever I got to know an Amish farmer well enough, I asked about farm profits. Always the answer was the same, spoken with careful modesty. Not as good as in the 70's, but okay. I heard that in 1983, '84 and even in '85, when finally the agribusiness magazines admitted that agriculture faced a fullblown crisis.

Eventually, or perhaps inevitably, I took my softball team to Holmes County for a cow pasture doubleheader. It was a grand day. The Amish bishop watched from his buggy behind home plate, sorely tempted, I was told, to join the game but afraid it might seem a bit demeaning to some of his congregation.

The games themselves taught two lessons in economy. First, our uniforms of blue and gold cost me more money than I care to talk about. The Amish players, with their traditional denims, broadcloth shirts and straw hats, are always in uniform. Second, some of our player/farmers could not take time off from their high-tech machines to play in the game. The Amish, with their slow, centuries-old methods, had plenty of time.

Housing is another good example of Amish economy. First of all, the Amish home doubles as an Amish church. How many millions of dollars this saves the Amish would be hard to calculate. Amish belief wisely provides for the appointment of ministers by lot. A minister works his farm like everyone else. Secondly, the Amish home doubles as the Amish retirement village and nursing home, thereby saving incalculably more millions of dollars, not to mention the self-respect of the elderly. The Amish do not pay Social Security, nor do they accept it. They know and practice a much better security that requires neither pension nor lifelong savings.

There is an old Amish quiltmaker who lives near Pffeifer's Station, a crossroads store and village I often frequent. Her immediate family is long gone and she lives now with somewhat distant relatives who, being nearest of kin, are pledged to care for her. Her quarters are a wee bit of a house connected to the main house by a covered walkway. I make up excuses to visit, pretending to be interested in quilts. I have no idea how old she is, other than ancient.

Around her I feel the kind of other-worldly peace I used to feel around nuns before they decided to dress up and hustle about like the rest of us. Her bedroom is just big enough for a bed and quilting frame; her kitchen is equally tiny. The boys of the family keep the walkway stacked with firewood for her stove. She has her own little garden. Children play on her doorstep.

She has her privacy but is surrounded by living love, not the dutiful professionalism of the old folks' home. And she still earns her way. Quilt buyers come, adding to her waiting list more quilts than her fingers, now slowed by arthritis, can ever catch up with. I love that scene. She still lives in the real world. If she were not Amish, she would have languished in some nursing home and no doubt be dead by now--from sheer boredom if nothing else.

Between the ballgames, sorghum pressing and barnraisings, I have had the chance to observe several Amish households enough to know that there are few generalities. The Herschbergers of the Schwartzentruber Amish, the Bontragers and all who live near Kenton, Ohio, and the Holmes County neighborhood where we played softball, all represent different economic levels. I do not wish to say that one is financially better off than another, because I do not know. But compared to a middle-class English household, the Herschbergers have the fewest amenities--not even a soft chair, although there is a beautiful, century-old pendulum clock on the wall. The nearby Kenton community is more "advanced" compared to the Herschbergers'.



The Holmes County houses are quite like our own except for the lack of electricity. These latter houses sport gas appliances, modern bathrooms, Maytag wringer washers with Honda gasoline motors (the Amish housewives say Hondas start easier than Briggs & Stratton). Although I saw none in the homes I visited, some Old Order Amish are allowed to use battery-operated electric typewriters! Although there is something of a lack of interior decoration as we would call it (unless you go in for the country-look craze), any middle-class American could move into one of these Holmes County homes and not feel materially deprived until habit called for television, radio, or record player.

There are no telephones in the homes, but the Amish use the telephone booths that dot the roadsides. An Amishman views a telephone wire in the home, like an electric line, as an umbilical cord tying them to dangerous worldly influences. You will not talk so long or often at a pay booth down the road.

Whatever one's views of such fence-straddling religious convictions, they obviously reveal tremendous economizing. In a 1972 study of Illinois Old Order Amish similar to the Holmes County Amish, conducted by the Center for the Biology of Natural Systems at Washington University in St. Louis, Amish housewives said they spent \$10 to \$15 a week on food and non-food groceries. They reported household living expenses from \$1379 for a small young family up to \$4700 for a large, better-financed one. My own Amish informants thought that today, that figure might top out at \$8000 for a large family, including transportation by buggy and occasionally renting a car or riding a bus. A horse and new buggy cost about \$2000 and last a good bit longer than a \$12,000 car. Throughout Amish country in eastern Ohio, a vigorous small business has grown up taxiing Amish around in vans, successfully competing with older private bus lines that perform the same service at a higher price. Clothing is a low budget item for the Amish as they use long-wearing fabrics and often sew the clothes themselves. Styles do not change.

Medical costs are the only expenses the Amish cannot control by their sub-economy. Religion forbids education beyond the early teens, so they cannot generate their own doctors and medical facilities, and must pay the same ridiculous rates as the rest of us.

Another surprising element in the Amish economy is the busy social life they lead within a day's ride by buggy or bicycle. We could scarcely schedule a softball game because there was always a wedding, a raising, a sale, a quilting, or church and school doings to attend! I can assure the world that the Amish have just as much fun as anyone, at far less than the cost of weekends made for Michelob.

It is in agriculture that the Amish raise economy to a high art. After the ballgames, when talk got around to the hard times in

farming today, the Amish said a good farmer could still make a good living with a herd of 20 to 25 cows. One of the players countered with mock seriousness: "Don't you know that you need at least 70 cows to make a living these days? Ohio State says so." "Oh my," an Amish dairyman replied, not entirely in jest, "If I could milk 70 cows, I'd be a millionaire." The Amish farmers all agreed that with 20 cows, a farmer could gross \$50,000 in a good-weather year, of which "about half" would be net after paying farm expenses including taxes and interest on land debt, if any. Deducting \$8000 for family living expenses still leaves a nice nest egg for emergencies, bad years, and savings to help offspring get started in farming. Beginning farmers with higher interest payments than normal often work as carpenters or at other jobs on the side. These income estimates agree closely with those in the Washington University study mentioned above and those Wendell Berry reports in *The Gift of Good Land*, a book that demonstrates the sound fiscal foundation of small-scale, traditional farming, even--or especially--in a modern world.



The most amazing part of the Amish economy to me is that, contrary to notions cherished by old farm magazine editors who escaped grim childhoods on 1930's farms for softer lives behind desks, the Amish do not work as hard, physically, as I did when my father and I were milking 100 cows with all the modern conveniences in the 1960's.

English farmers like to make fun of the Amish for their hair-splitting ways with technology --allowing tractors or engines for stationary power tools but not in the fields. But in addition to keeping the Amish way of life intact, such compromises bring tremendous economy to their farming while lightening the workload. A motor-powered baler or corn harvester, pulled by horses ahead of a forecart, may seem ridiculous to a modern agribusinessman, but it saves thousands of dollars over

buying tractors for this work. The reasons tractors aren't allowed in the fields is that they would then tempt an Amishman to expand acreage, going into steep debt to do so, and in the process drive other Amish off the land --which is exactly why and how American agriculture got into the trouble engulfing it today.

To satisfy religious restrictions, the Amish have developed many other ingenious ideas to use modern technology in economizing ways. Other farmers should be studying, not belittling, them. When Grade A milk regulations forced electric cooling tanks on dairymen, the Amish adopted diesel motors to generate their own electricity for the milk room, cooler and milk machines. They say it's cheaper than buying electricity and keeps them secure from power outages. Similarly, they operate commercial woodworking and other shops with diesel-powered hydraulic pumps rather than individual electric motors for each tool. Their small woodworking shops, like their printing and publishing houses and a lot of other enterprises, make money where others so often fail.

Where Amish are active, countryside and town are full of bustling shops and small businesses, neat homes, solid schools and churches, and scores of roadside stands and cheese factories. East central Ohio even has a small woolen mill, one of the few remaining in the country. Compare this region with the decaying towns and empty farmsteads of the land dominated by large-scale agribusiness. The Amish economy spills out to affect the whole local economy. Some farmers, like Lencie Cleppinger near Mount Vernon, have the great good sense to farm like the Amish even though they don't live like them. They enjoy profits too. When discussing the problems agribusiness farmers have brought on themselves, Cleppinger just shook his head and repeated, "What in the world are they thinking?"

The Amish sum it up in a sentence. "Don't spend more than you make and life will be good to you." Uncle Deficit should be so wise.

This article is taken from the May-June issue of Not Man Apart, the Newsmagazine of Friends of the Earth--Volume 16, Number 3. It originally appeared in The Whole Earth Review.

Selling the New Age Message

*Condensed from an article submitted
by Charles Mauch.*

Large numbers of people are beginning to realize that we need sweeping change in this country, and we need it now. Many are going beyond the talking stage, changing their lifestyles in various ways; some are even experimenting with various forms of intentional community.

Despite all this ferment, the overall process is agonizingly slow. None of the available alternatives seem to strike quite the right chord with the general public; none really has a great deal of appeal for mainstream Americans. The entire New Age idea seems somehow drab and unappealing, if not threatening, alarming, and downright unAmerican. It is simply not attractive; a non-progressive lifestyle to be resisted and avoided. In other words, the message isn't getting through, at least not in an acceptable form.

Most intentional communities have all kinds of problems, just as individuals do--people problems, money problems, organizational problems and so on--but most of all, they are simply poor. Their members are hard-pressed to find an acceptable source of income that is adequate to support a reasonably comfortable lifestyle, yet one that is non-violent, non-competitive, ecologically sound, and generally non-destructive of New Age values.

What is needed is a demonstration that New Age principles really work in a way that is attractive and desirable to the average American. We need to create an intentional community/ecovillage/New Town that is a living, breathing, working model of what the future could be like--a sort of city of tomorrow. It would be difficult, but it could be done. Let us consider one such possibility:

Most people are familiar with the EPCOT Center at Disney World. Disney originally visualized the Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow to be exactly that. Lake Buena Vista was meant to be a real, full-scale city with real people leading real

lives in a "tomorrowland" environment with all kinds of whiz-bang technology at their fingertips, incorporating the very latest of everything; better living through chemistry and so on. It was to be a working laboratory that would show the way into the future, as he and most other people thought it would look 25 or 30 years ago.

As things turned out, the future looks a lot different now. Most "New Agers" are now agreed that it won't be like that at all, but most average Americans still don't know (or don't want to believe) that the world has changed. They want it to be the way Disney said it would be--shiny, affluent, All-American, exciting. They don't want to hear about lowered expectations and all kinds of dismal things like that.

But why not build a real EPCOT--one based on fact rather than dreams and science fiction? Disney got corporations such as Exxon, General Electric and Union Carbide to sponsor and finance his various exhibits. We would go to the developers of solar technology and other New Age, socially responsible, future-oriented businesses. "New Age" need not and should not mean "anti-business." Businesses of various types are a vital part of any modern society and should be encouraged in every way possible, provided they meet certain well-defined criteria.

Our New Age Center could be a showcase for various exhibits such as an energy demonstration area (PVCs, windmills, methane digesters, an alcohol fermentation/distillation column, etc.), an aquaculture/fish farm, a biodynamic/French intensive minifarm, greenhouse, compost heap, solar and earth sheltered house/building. There could be a recycling center, bookstore and printing shop, TV station/media/communication center, a tool share/rental service, a handyman/home repair center, a nursery school/daycare center, health food store/bakery/restaurant and farmer's market. Also a craft shop that would serve as an outlet for items made in existing communities throughout the country. These items could be stocked on consignment and their sale would be of benefit to the manufacturers as well as to our New Age Center.

We could also attract people doing research on new types of housing, renewable energy,

and other New Age activities from all over the country to relocate here in one spot where they could interact, exchange ideas, and support each other in a congenial community. We could be a think tank/research center, and maybe some better communication would result. Our sponsors might help in developing and marketing any new ideas on some partnership basis.



Such a New Age Center should attract a lot of press and draw large numbers of visitors (customers). We could charge a nominal admission fee and take in a lot of tourist money from the sale of various products and services. Granted, this is not something that every New Town could do, but at least we could have one--a showcase--with a really solid economic base. It could have a lot of hands-on things for people to do and be a valuable educational device, attracting people from around the country.

Though I consider myself a New Age person, I have never seen a solar hot water heater. Or a true solar house; or a composting toilet; or even a greenhouse, other than the old fashioned kind. How many people have? We all know about these things and believe in them, but comparatively few have actually had the chance to examine them up close. We could begin fairly small with a few "core activities" and add things on as we go.

Attracting corporate sponsorship would take a great deal of work, but could be done. It would be necessary to demonstrate that participation/sponsorship could be translated into favorable publicity, sales, and a positive impact on the "bottom line." The planning and effort would require much time and ingenuity, but with care to demonstrate that the maintenance of profitability is not incompatible with high ethical and social standards.

We wouldn't want to be captive to the sponsoring businesses or create a "circus" atmosphere. Areas open to the public would be at least partially separated from the usual living/working areas of the residents, with enough limited access to be educational to the public without being unduly intrusive to

the residents. The entire project would be a living demonstration of a possible future that is not grim and foreboding, but attractive, livable, sustainable and desirable.

We might contact various cities to see which would give us the best deal--cheap or free land, taxbreaks, free publicity, and so on. Cities and even states compete for new industry and military bases--why wouldn't they want something that would draw tourists, publicity and jobs to their area? Many cities are hurting and would love to have us.

Or this might be done in conjunction with an existing community where much of the hard preliminary work has been done and people are in place, some looking for jobs or an economic base. There, people wouldn't even need to relocate and they might already have some possible tourist attractions.

This project should be the joint effort of as many interested groups as possible, representing a large cross-section of the New Age community. It could be a way to unify and inspire some of the widespread but uncoordinated activity that is going on all over the country. We hope eventually to involve large numbers of people in such an effort, but most such enterprises begin with a small core of willing planners/dreamers/workers. I would appreciate hearing from any individual or group who wishes to discuss this in more detail, or who has an alternate plan. Please send any comments to the author at P.O. Box 741955, Dallas, TX 75374.



STAFF COMMENT: We invite communities and individual readers to respond to Mr. Mauch's proposal to integrate alternative ideas into the mainstream. Is this feasible, desirable on a large scale? Is this idea already being sufficiently realized by such groups as the Farallones Institute, Cerro Gordo Community, etc.? Does true community suffer when mass marketing is emphasized? How much "community" is necessary for a New Town prototype?

We all live in community of one sort or another. Tell us what you think.

Bioregionalism Conference

by Jane Morgan

Kirkpatrick Sale, author of Human Scale and Dwellers In The Land: The Bioregional Vision says in his preface to the latter:

I have been led to this consideration of the shape of the bioregional vision, inevitably as it were, by the trajectory of my previous work: on American radicalism, on American regionalism, on the abject failure of American giantism. It expresses for me not merely the newest and most comprehensive form of the ideals of decentralism, participation, liberation, mutualism, and community that I have expounded in all that work--but, as it stems from the most elemental perception of the crises of the planet, the ideals of ecological sanity, regional consciousness, speciate humility, and global survival.

It is for me, therefore, not merely a new way of envisioning and enacting a very old American ideal, but also a crucial, and perhaps virtually the only possible, means of arresting the impending ecological apocalypse.

I hope you will understand and come to share that perception, feel that urgency, and ultimately become energized by that vision.



We hope so too. That is why we are having a conference on Bioregionalism and Community this October in Yellow Springs. Other resource people present will be Gregg Galbraith, founder of the Ozark Regional Land Trust; Ruth Traut, founder of Earth Renewable Enterprises; Jim Schenk, founder of Imago in Cincinnati and Bill Cahalan, editor of Four Rivers Earthworks newsletter. Ruth, Jim & Bill will work as a team to present their concerns for the local bioregion and Gregg Galbraith will explore with us the uses of land trusts to build community and to help save the environment.

The cost of this weekend conference is only \$50 per person or \$90 per couple. It is not too late to plan to come. If you have lost your conference brochure or did not receive

one, just write or call us and we will mail it to you right away. (See page 11.)

Don't forget Kirk Sale's inspiring book Dwellers In The Land is available for \$14.95 (hardback) postpaid before the conference and Gregg Galbraith will send a package of land trust material to those who pre-register.



Commentary

RESPONSE TO VICTOR TAUFERNER (MAY-JUNE ISSUE)

by Jann Rucquoi

This wet morning I should be out scything down that patch of thistles and the other one of nettles next to the garden--but maybe what community is about is to pick up on the impulse to connect and share my thoughts for a few moments in the midst of husbanding my own little parcel of earth responsibility.

I was very touched by Victor Tauferner's description of the very hard and lonesome life he has obviously so doggedly lived in his rural community home. I think it's very important for starry-eyed urban folk to hear what he has to say about moving into a rural community - remaining an outsider, a foreigner not accepted - and the years don't seem to change their minds much.

But whole new patterns are in the side wings. This small 8 acre farm that has been my home for the past 15 years (but not exclusively, since I also have a foothold in New York City and bounce around somewhat) is in a former anthracite coal mining part of northeastern Pennsylvania which is rather economically depressed. We were definitely the outsiders when we first moved in, especially so because we set up a non-profit organization to host concerts and festivals from jazz to classical to folk and finally, yes, blue grass, which did the trick of getting our neighbors enthusiasm.

A group of us met for a year to form a parent cooperative school for our children. Board members and friends put in a lot of time, not to mention my own family, the children here

and next door! I admit to burn out after 7 years of organizing but it looks as if a new phase is beginning with the enthusiasm and fresh look of those who are just coming in to make the farm their home. One of the really big differences between this little place in N.E. Pennsylvania and Victor's in Arkansas is that in a little less than 3 hours we are in touch with Philadelphia or New York City. In fact, this spring and summer I have been blitzkriegering New York with ads and flyers for people to come out to share in the farm; make it theirs on a full or part-time basis, as a get-away place from the city, a place to touch the earth from time to time or to come make this their permanent home. The results are very exciting and we are burgeoning.

Because this is closer to bigger cities, there may be more of a transient population, those coming in, those coming back after having had a little more experience. For whatever reasons, it seems that we have finally integrated into our local community and have easy dialogue with our neighbors, with a certain flow of mutual respect even if we don't have totally common lifestyles. Some of the closest children treat our home as theirs and come over to take part in our latest project, sometimes sharing in the goodies afterwards--our own banana splits or pancakes.

I really feel that the biggest role for us (small rural places with a vision that is planetary) is networking among ourselves for inspiration and support; being available for those who need to put their feet into the earth; being a creative source of cross pollination in our local community and taking advantage of the wider expanse and ease of communications for all these aspects as little centers of light and grounding.



Book Review



FROM THE ROOTS UP: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS IF COMMUNITY MATTERED by David P. Ross and Peter J. Usher. Published by The Bootstrap Press, 1986, 153 pp.

In their book, From The Roots Up: Economic Development As If Community Mattered, David Ross and Peter Usher seem to echo President Reagan's proclamation that the New Deal is dead. They criticize big government programs and endorse a small town model much like the President's pioneer America. They also, however, note the suffering caused by conservatives' abandonment of the poor. Their vision of sound, humane economic structures celebrates the creative and caring spirit of ordinary people.

The authors portray a current economic system indifferent to, if not actively hostile toward, genuine human needs. They depict the dualism most of us live as we work away from our homes (and often our communities) among strangers, performing generally very specialized tasks that have no significance to our personal lives.

Still worse is the increasing influence commercial enterprise exerts over our shrinking private lives. Profit and productivity override material and social human need as factors deciding how and where many of us live. The ultimate cost of this imbalance, they say, is the massive starvation and pollution which characterizes the current age.

Usher and Ross look no more kindly upon traditional remedies for social and economic ills. They offer a brief exposition of mainstream economic approaches which range from ultra-conservative "supply side" economics to the government interventionism endorsed by social democrats. They observe a weakening Western formal economy which has left many no recourse but to create support systems outside the mainstream. Such small, community-centered enterprises comprise the informal economy upon which the authors place their hope for reform.

Economic activity, they argue, should meet both material and social needs of all people:

thus their interest in small, local production, a system which "cannot exist apart from the goal of maintaining the mutual social bonds and obligations of the local society."

The informal economy includes a wide range of activity, from housework to barter to cooperatives and small business. Whereas formal economic structures tend to be hierarchical, specialized and profit-oriented, informal activity allows for broader participation in decision-making and greater diversity. Participants in this type of enterprise are at least as invested in their relationships with each other and their communities as in the product or service they produce.

The authors propose local production of goods and services consumed because a diversified local economy is more stable and provides fuller participation than the now typical specialization. They suggest a four-part program to encourage such development: 1) downscaling of larger businesses while taking steps to introduce social accountability; 2) decentralization of government decision-making; 3) assistance to informal enterprises; 4) greater valuation of household activity as men take more active roles in their homes.

In addition, they suggest creative alternatives be sought to replace taxes and social programs which would decrease in a decentralized, less money-oriented economy. They cite the Swedish example of volunteer work replacing financial tax payments.

This vision, though not entirely new, represents a clear and brilliant realization of the truest human values. Beyond reforming capitalism, it addresses our need to perform meaningful work in the context of caring relationships. Ross and Usher recognize the personal nature of production, consumption and assistance. Still more, they offer these elements as part of a stable economic model.

The hope we gain from this ideal is tempered, however, by a realization that such reforms must evolve. The stages offered to achieve more informal economic activity appear simplistic and unlikely. Neither governments nor big businesses readily relinquish power. More seriously, it reveals a greater confidence in current big power systems than in the will of common people. This orientation

denies the same social/economic grassroots activity that inspired the authors' vision.

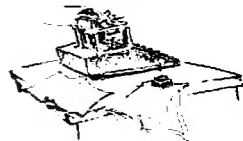
The conditions are now favorable for transition to more local, informal economic activity. The technology now exists to make small, local production an affordable reality. Maternity leave, day care programs, flex-time policies and employee counseling services have become standard among large corporations. ESOP's and quality circles anticipate the more democratic business structure to come.

These elements coupled with increased dependence on mutual aid, barter and voluntarism suggest a social and economic revolution is taking place, a redefinition of work, business and community. Offering much more than Reagan's idealized vision of the past, Ross and Usher propose a new, higher level of existence that's indeed being realized from the roots up.

--Brian Fallon

Readers

Write



ABOUT BIG BUSINESS VS. COMMUNITY

Perusing my March/April copy of the Community Service Newsletter reminds me it is high time I wrote to you. Just the other day I ran across some wonderful correspondence with Griscom--written in 1970 when the oil refinery was a threat to the eastern end of Washington County, Maine. Fortunately we were able to keep them out, thanks to a lot of hard work and money, especially from one Doc Hodgins....

Once again, the county has an intruder; this time it is Ultrasystems, a California outfit which succeeded in convincing the locals in Jonesboro (Machias' neighbor) that a wood-fired power plant would provide jobs for a depressed economy and clean our forests of dead wood (spruce budworm). This company has a poor record environmentally. It is building a monstrous structure on the Jonesboro town line (just 5 miles from Machias) and it

is slated to go on line in October. A friend of mine put money into fighting the project; unfortunately he hired a man who, while very thorough, was too radical for the local people, and the issue ultimately became one of "locals vs. outsiders."

In retrospect I wish I had written to you--a gentler approach, I think, would have made a huge difference.... Once again, big business and profiteers have their way. It is depressing--15 years after a major battle was won, another is lost.

The NEWSLETTER is looking so good--graphics are delightful! And of course I look forward to the articles. Your publication and work is without doubt a most vital contribution, especially in view of society's current problems and the runaway economy. Small is beautiful! (but there are times when I think the big corporations and the consenting majority are winning the battle). Keep up the good work!

Nancy Bennett, Machais, Maine



ABOUT THE NEWSLETTER

It's been a while since we've seen each other but I always appreciate hearing what you have to say in the Community Newsletter even though I haven't been able to participate very much. I was really struck by the poignant account of Victor Tauferner's experience establishing himself in Arkansas. Of course, that is much more rural than we are here, but still there are a lot of similarities in all of rural America - conservative, shy, if not downright rather hostile, to the newcomer with all their new-fangled ideas.

But it brought home to me all over again how important it is to hang in together, how important to feel connected to the bigger picture, how important to be connected in some way with the community, region, country, continent, planet, right down to the One Basic Nitty Gritty. Thank you too for hanging in with such good communications.

Jann Rucquoi, Dalton, Pennsylvania

ABOUT THE MEMBERS DIRECTORY

I am interested in the Members Networking Directory. I believe that I misunderstood when joining, for I thought it was sent to all members and I have not yet received one. Please clarify this for me.

Vivian Koser, Dillsburg, Pennsylvania

EDITOR'S NOTE: The Members Directory is an optional service to encourage communication, or "networking" among members. Only members who ask to be on it receive the Directory. It is updated each January and is sent only to those on the list and new members who specifically request to be included.

Announcements



MEDICINE WHEEL GATHERING

A modern-day Medicine Wheel Gathering will take place October 3-5 at Camp Kern, (7 miles from Lebanon, Ohio. Medicine Wheels are sacred ceremonial centers in many Native cultures. This Gathering will bring together Native American medicine persons (including Sun Bear and Wabun), teachers of Hawaiian spirituality and others who will share their knowledge of skills for living in closer harmony with the earth.

Cost is \$150 for the entire weekend. Children 3-12, \$70. Special children's program for those under 2 years, \$15. For more information call 513/921-3411.



OZARK CALENDARS

Beautiful 1987 Ozark Calendars, featuring 13 color photographs of the Ozarks and a seasonal almanac, are now available through Community Service for \$9.00 postpaid. The purchase of this calendar benefits the Ozark Regional Land Trust, a non-profit conservation foundation. Gregg Galbraith, founder of the ORLT, will be a speaker at our October conference.

CO-OP & PEACE SEMINARS

Two week-long seminars will be held at Rainbow Ridge Cooperative Community. The first, October 18-25, will study co-ops and credit unions as a means of developing a more cooperative and peaceful society. The second, November 8-15, is titled "Peace and Cooperation" and will emphasize ways of replacing the competitive system that leads to poverty, conflict and war, with one that is based on cooperation. Cost for tuition and board is \$200. Write to Rainbow Ridge c/o McLanahans, 3689 Berea Rd., Richmond, KY 40475 or call 606/623-0695.



IMAGINATION CONFERENCE

IMAGINATION is the name for the Alliance for Cultural Democracy's 10th anniversary conference to be held November 7-10 in Boston, MA. The conference will embrace cultural action as a strategy for enabling diverse peoples to creatively determine their own lives. ACD is the only nationwide, non-profit organization for community-based programs and activist artists involved in community and cultural work in urban, suburban and rural settings.

Housing and childcare available upon advance request. \$55 for members, \$65 for non-members. For more information contact: ACD c/o Vivienne Simon, 42 Jamaica Rd., Brookline, MA 02146. Telephone 617/277-1009 or 423-3711. Many arts agencies provide financial assistance to attend conferences like this one; contact your state arts council for details.



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Membership

Membership is a means of supporting and sharing the work of Community Service. The basic \$15 annual membership contribution includes a subscription to our bi-monthly NEWSLETTER and 10% off all Community Service-published literature. Larger contributions are always needed however, and smaller ones will be gladly accepted. Community Service is a non-profit corporation which depends on contributions to run its operation. All contributions are appreciated, needed and tax deductible. Due to added postage costs, overseas membership is \$20 in U.S. currency.

Editor's Note

We welcome letters to the editor (under 300 words) and articles (700-1500 words) about any notable communities or people who are improving the quality of life in their communities. Please enclose a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you wish the article returned. The only compensation we can offer is the satisfaction of seeing your words in print and knowing you have helped spread encouraging and/or educational information.

Address Changes

If there is an error on your mailing label, please send the old label and any corrections to us promptly. It increases our cost greatly if the Post Office notifies us of moves, not to mention that we like hearing from our members and friends!

Have Your Friends Seen the Newsletter?

Please send the names and addresses of your friends who might enjoy receiving a sample NEWSLETTER and booklist. (If you wish specific issues sent, please send .50 per copy.)

Editor's Note #2

We occasionally exchange our mailing list with a group with similar purposes such as the Arthur Morgan School at Celo or Communities Magazine. If you do not wish us to give your name to anyone, please let us know.

Trustees

Charles Betterton, Phyllis Cannon, Cyndde DeWeese, Jim DeWeese, Lance Grolla, Agnes Gruliov, Weston Hare, Cecil Holland, Christine W. Morgan, Griscom Morgan, Ross Morgan, Gerard Poortinga, Christine Sage, Tim Sontag, Heather Woodman.



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You can tell when your Community Service membership expires by looking at the month and year in the upper right corner of your mailing address. Please renew your membership now if it has expired or will expire before 10/86. The minimum membership contribution is \$15 per year. We do not send individual reminders to renew.

Community Service, Inc.
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Address Correction Requested

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